

BRENDAN GALVIN

Phantom Pain

Cossack Lager, Sailor Hat, Blue Bullet Ale,
Frankenheim, whatever was drawn off
the bottom or top of a local tank
as too heavy or light to be the brand —

the beers I drank when I was young
and broke, I pour for slug bait now,
setting plastic cups around the garden.

Raccoons went through my beans last night,
raising hell, and tossed all that beer off,
then nosed and clawed
around the squashes after more.

I can see them agate-eyed with drink
out there, mumbling to each other,
letting go a holler,

finally ignoring the vegetables and heading
for the sunflower seeds
with the same bandit brains
those off-brands gave me more than once.

Therefore they are forgiven, though
I won't forgive myself the tricycle
I stole off a dark country road
forty-five years ago, and tried to pedal
through a beach party fire. Phantom pain:

not the zing of a lost limb, returning,
but the memory of old horror shows, control
and dignity so gone that I still groan aloud.
So many prom dresses stepped on, so many promises.